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Huge Data Loss To China Is Seen From Espionage

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 29 — A former Central Intelligence Agency analyst is thought to have given China many of the C.I.A.'s top-secret reports on the Far East written over the last 20 years, a Reagan Administration official said today.

According to the official, the Government believes that the analyst, Larry Wu-Tai Chin, 63 years old, had access to nearly all these documents. The official, who is knowledgeable about the case, said Mr. Chin was one of the intelligence agency's most experienced Chinese-language translators and was involved in distributing C.I.A. reports to the White House and other Federal agencies.

Another Administration official said Mr. Chin might have provided the Chinese with detailed information about American policymaking in the Vietnam War. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mr. Chin has confessed spying for the Chinese since at least 1962.

'A Mole for a Long Time'

Intelligence officials have been unable to explain how a C.I.A. employee might be able to spy for so long without detection.

"He's been a mole for a long time, and he had access to all levels of classified information, secret and up," a law-enforcement official said. Federal officials said today that Mr. Chin might have received as much as \$1 million from the Chinese in exchange for American secrets.

Despite reports that Mr. Chin was a relatively low-ranking intelligence agency analyst, officials said today that he probably had done more damage to the United States than three other Americans who were arrested on spying charges over the last two weeks.

"He was no small fish," an F.B.I. official said.

Arrest Came in Roundup

Mr. Chin was arrested last Friday night as part of a four-day roundup of Americans accused of spying. The others were Jonathan Jay Pollard, a Naval counterintelligence analyst, and his wife, Anne Henderson-Pollard, who were charged with spying for Israel, and Ronald W. Pelton, a former communications specialist for the National Security Agency, accused of selling se-

crets to the Soviet Union.

The Justice Department had no comment on a report in today's editions of The Los Angeles Times that Mr. Pelton gave information to Soviet agents that compromised a multibillion-dollar espionage project in the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, the United States announced sanctions in the spreading espionage controversy with Ghana. The State Department today ordered the expulsion of four Ghanaian diplomats in retaliation for Ghana's demand that four American officials leave that Western African country.

The department said it would have no comment on allegations that two of the American officials were C.I.A. employees.

The mutual expulsions came four days after the United States and Ghana exchanged a Ghanaian national accused of spying on C.I.A. agents in Ghana for a group of Ghanaians linked to American intelligence.

Mr. Chin's lawyer, Peter Meyers, did not return phone calls today from a reporter seeking comment on the allegations against his client.

Mr. Chin, a resident of Alexandria, Va., is being held without bail until trial. His lawyer said earlier this week that Mr. Chin would plead not guilty to the espionage charges, which carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Prosecutors have charged that Mr. Chin began supplying the Chinese with confidential information more than 30 years ago. His purported espionage activities continued after his retirement from the agency in 1981, when he began taking part-time translation work from the intelligence agency, officials have said.

"Chin was one of the senior guys when it came to China projects" at the C.I.A., a law-enforcement official said today. "People went to him when they had problems with something. He was highly respected."

Officials said that Mr. Chin, who has already been charged with accepting \$140,000 from the Chinese Government, may actually have received as much as \$1 million, some of it invested in real estate in the Washington area. "He's told us \$140,000," a law-enforcement official said. "We think that's a very, very, very low estimate."

Mr. Chin had spent most of his career at the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, an arm of the intelligence agency, that is involved with monitoring and analyzing foreign broadcasts. Shortly after his arrest, intelligence sources described Mr. Chin as a low-level translator who had little access to sensitive information.

Law-enforcement agents quickly disputed that, saying that Mr. Chin was one of only a handful of senior C.I.A. employees fluent in Chinese. Consequently, they said he was allowed ac-

cess to what one described as "an incredible array" of top-secret information about the Far East.

An official said that Mr. Chin's work probably permitted him access to sensitive information about American policymaking in the Vietnam War. Prosecutors had previously said that Mr. Chin gave the Chinese highly confidential information during the Korean War about the status of Chinese prisoners held in American camps.

"If something important needed translating from Chinese or into Chinese, Chin would help," said one law-enforcement official. According to court records, Mr. Chin had top-secret clearance at the intelligence agency.

The official said that Mr. Chin would often be involved in analyzing sensitive intelligence material gathered from China. By learning where the material had come from, the official said, Mr. Chin could help Chinese agents identify the source of the information.

At a court hearing earlier this week, an F.B.I. agent testified that Chinese officials needed two months to translate each shipment of material supplied by Mr. Chin. His information was considered so valuable, the agent said, that Mr. Chin's identity was revealed to a few people within China's intelligence services.

The agent, Mark R. Johnson, said that Mr. Chin was the guest of honor at a banquet in Peking in 1982 that was attended by some of China's leading intelligence officers. "He was treated royally," Mr. Johnson said.

The F.B.I. said it began its investigation of Mr. Chin in December 1983.

In Washington meanwhile, the State Department announced that the United States would expel the Ghanaian diplomats and review its assistance programs to Ghana, which receives about \$15 million in United States aid each year.

The Ghanaian Government has given the four American officials 48 hours to leave Ghana, and Charles Redman, a State Department spokesman, said the same deadline would apply for the Ghanaian diplomats here.